

# Equality Analysis (EA)

## Accommodation & Hospitality

### Strategic planning of student accommodation provision

#### A. Policy/practice details

1. Strategic Planning of Student Accommodation Provision

#### 2 Please explain the main purpose of the policy being analysed.

To ensure that the University plans and maintains sufficient bedstock provision to fulfil the diverse needs of those guaranteed accommodation under the University's recruitment and allocation policy.

Every December we receive figures from the University as to the projected targets for undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment for the following academic year. We then compile a matrix, which plans where different categories of students will be housed, in order to fulfil our accommodation guarantee for all eligible students. The matrix helps to determine the number and length of different student contracts and the rents required to cover operational costs as well as providing a reserve towards regular maintenance and refurbishments. Periodically, in line with University strategy, we will undertake new builds or additional means of providing accommodation to fulfil increased demand.

#### 3. Who will be affected?

1. Students; 2. Admissions; 3. Academic Depts; 4. Accommodation & Hospitality Staff; 5. Estates; 6. Resident Tutors; 7. Student Support Services

#### 4. Aspects of the policy that particularly impact on equality and diversity.

##### a) Allocation policy

The EIA completed in 2010 is still very relevant and can be viewed at:  
[http://www.bath.ac.uk/equalities/EIA/reports/pdf1011/Residences\\_allocation.pdf](http://www.bath.ac.uk/equalities/EIA/reports/pdf1011/Residences_allocation.pdf)

With regards to the additional protected characteristics now covered and not mentioned in the original EIA we would comment:



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**Age** – Due consideration has to be given:

- to those under 18, who will normally be housed on campus and/or in close proximity to a Resident Tutor as we have an enhanced duty of care towards these students. In 2010 and 2011 we had around 66 students on entry who were under 18 but most reached 18 by mid-session and very low numbers (3) were still 17 at the end of the first year of undergraduate study.
- to more mature students who normally highlight some additional requirements eg quieter, older kitchen group; lift access etc.
- if someone is younger than 17 on date of entry, we may recommend that it is better for them to live privately with a family/ relative or chaperone initially and “save” their guaranteed year of accommodation until they are 17/18 so that they can take full advantage of the “independent lifestyle” which is generally recognised as a valuable part of the whole student experience.

**Religion or belief** –

The most common request in this connection is for ensuite facilities or single gender kitchen group or a studio for self-containment due to dietary needs.

**Sexual Orientation**

This characteristic is not often highlighted at the application or allocation stage, but will be discussed further under e) and f) below.

**Transgender people**

Most commonly, ensuite facilities are requested and/or a specific type of kitchen group eg all male or all female. We need to be aware of potential sensitivities should a trans person request a single gender kitchen group during early transition stages, but from past experience we have found that we have a broad enough range of room/kitchen group options to fulfil an individual’s preference and needs.

**Pregnancy and Maternity** –

Pregnancy may occasionally be the reason for a student leaving an accommodation contract early and this will be handled sensitively and fairly under normal procedures. We have rarely been requested to house a student with a baby under 26 weeks old, and on the one occasion it occurred in recent history the couple were already living in a family flat and we just had to give them permission to have a relative stay for a couple of months to help look after the infant, while the postgraduates finished their studies. Normally, a student would suspend their studies prior to having the baby, and only return once they had suitable childcare facilities in place to cover their absences when attending lectures etc. The University currently has no accommodation suitable for a family (only couples) so our efforts would be directed to helping them find suitable accommodation in the private sector. Institutional accommodation is not ideal for families as the appropriate routine/surroundings for young children does not fit easily with general student life.

**b) Range, type and cost of accommodation provided.**



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It is important to keep a broad range to suit different needs and to be affordable for various budgets. Our prices range from £65 - £195 and we offer shared rooms, standard and ensuite single study bedrooms, self-contained studios and flats. The majority are offered on a self-catered basis but by September 2012 we will have extended our catered option from one to two residences. Once we have voids available to allocate, a degree of discretion may be needed in deciding who is allocated to what area depending on the ratio of male/female residents or the existing ratio of home/international students in a particular group. Connected to allocation, the language used to describe rooms; the pricing and location of rooms could have a differential impact indirectly on different equalities groups.

### **c) Location of accommodation**

Currently we have approximately one third of rooms in the city centre and two thirds on campus.

### **d) Facilities and services provided within the accommodation**

Students, other than those with a disability and the appropriate care provision in place, are expected to be capable of "independent living" given the facilities and services provided.

### **e) Transfer and Termination policy**

All students seeking either a room transfer or to terminate their contract early are given the opportunity to explain why and we specifically ask them to highlight any reasons on the grounds of gender, race or disability and this will be extended to cover the additional protected characteristics next year

### **f) Residential Rules and Regulations**

In "Campus Life" we place a strong emphasis on our commitment to ensuring a learning, working and living environment in which the dignity of all individuals is respected, and any form of harassment is deemed wholly unacceptable and offenders may be permanently excluded from university residence.

## **Analysis**

5. Please indicate evidence used and the process by which you have arrived at your conclusions.

**A) Gender, Race and Disability** are evaluated fully in the 2010 Equality Impact Assessment.

**Age** - We always aim to fulfil specific needs of under 18s or more mature students subject to availability and given sufficient advance warning.

We have not, as yet, been requested to provide accommodation for a "chaperone" (as opposed to a "carer" for someone with a disability), and our approach would be to



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deal with such requests on a “case by case” basis. A lot could depend on the age of the chaperone eg other students may not welcome the continued presence of a senior person/motherly figure in their kitchen group not connected to any academic course. On the other hand a younger relative/chaperone might be more acceptable.

In any case, we would have concerns about the potential “isolation” for any chaperone, which has come to our attention previously when dealing with some carers. We would also have to weigh up possibly denying a valuable bedspace to a new full-time student in order to house a non-student chaperone.

### **Religion or belief**

High priority is always given to such requests and if, due to lateness of application, we are not able to provide the ideal room type immediately, all students have the choice to apply for a room transfer and we will facilitate the room move for such reasons at the earliest opportunity. We have never been requested to provide a specific flat or block for purely students of one particular faith, but due to the “cluster” style of much of our accommodation it could be arranged without significant problems, for as long as the original group who requested the same was maintained.

### **Sexual Orientation and Transgender people**

Data Protection is enhanced for trans people and we would abide by a student's request to refer to them under their preferred name, irrespective of whether they may actually be registered under a different name on their student records. The key to integration of these students is sensitivity, flexibility and understanding and the feedback received from those we have helped is extremely positive.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

The lack of University family accommodation could be seen as being detrimental to these protected characteristics as well as towards more mature students, but really no more than it impacts on all students. Three students (out of 160 requests who sought early termination of contracts during the current year) gave the reason as wishing to move out to family accommodation. Where eligible, we will always offer single accommodation to a student while they seek private sector accommodation in the city of Bath in order to have their family join them.

As funding becomes tighter for all categories of students and scholarships now rarely support more than the individual, family applications are far fewer than 10 years ago, and the relevance of our provision reflects the higher demand from single individual students.

### **B) Range, type and cost of accommodation provided.**

Other than the issue highlighted above re family accommodation, we allocate to those with additional requirements/protected characteristics first and have no evidence that we are failing to meet their requirements if their application is timely. Thus we consider our range, type and cost of accommodation to be relevant and proportionate to demand.



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### **C) Location of accommodation**

Demand is naturally highest for accommodation on campus for reasons of convenience and security. We are working to provide a further 700 beds on campus by September 2014 in order to be able to house all first year undergraduates on campus and a larger proportion of senior students. This can only help us to be even more flexible and accommodating in fulfilling equality objectives.

### **D) Facilities and services provided within the accommodation**

We have a good provision of mobility rooms and to date have never been close to utilising them all for students with disabilities. Reasonable adjustments are undertaken on an individual case by case basis.

More frequent challenges are posed by students with certain medical conditions such as Asperger's and those with mental health conditions, as they can either find it difficult to organise their daily tasks or maintain levels of hygiene and cleanliness which then impinges negatively on the rest of their kitchen group, or they may suffer from OCD and be less tolerant of the behaviour of fellow students, so both approaches can lead to disputes. Our policy is to attempt to help them establish and follow a routine acceptable to all with the support of Resident Tutors and Operations staff, and thus alleviate negative impact on other students with whom they are sharing.

### **E) Transfer and Termination policy**

Only one male student (out of 200+ transfer requests) mentioned a preference for a mixed group, rather than all male, due to his bi-sexuality, and when offered a different room, chose to stay with his original group. Only 1 transfer request for an ensuite room quoted "religious reasons". On the following page there is a graph to show the primary reasons given to date this academic year for transfer requests, that could allude to those with protected characteristics, even though not explicitly stated – the other main reasons not shown just relate to noise or location of room. Given the very low percentage (.017%) of such requests we feel the vast majority of students are satisfied with the provision.

### **F) Residential Rules and Regulations**

We give examples of the sort of behaviour which might constitute harassment and for what reasons, the most common being race, colour, disability, sex, religion, politics, and sexual orientation. Over the last three years, our disciplinary procedures have only found evidence to support two specific cases of harassment, both committed under the influence of alcohol, where appropriate warnings were issued.

## **6. Risk of adverse impact on protected groups**



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	High impact	Medium impact	Low impact
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Gender			✓
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓	
Race/ethnicity		✓	
Religion/belief		✓	
Sexual Orientation			✓
Transgender		✓	
Marriage/civil partnership		✓	

### C. Mitigating potential adverse impact

7. Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to the policy/practice. Please give an outline of the key actions based on any gaps, challenges, priorities and opportunities you have identified.

- Proposed provision of additional 700 student rooms on campus by September 2014 will give us the opportunity to house all first years on campus and to increase our accommodation offer to certain categories of students not currently considered to be eligible eg home/eu postgraduates and returning finalists. This should improve the balance of home/eu and international senior students and help to develop the mutual understanding of diverse needs, especially of those with protected characteristics, in and amongst our cosmopolitan student base.
- It will be interesting to see if the new initiative this year of University Managed Housing in the private sector, if developed after the two year trial, gives us a valuable additional option to offer to certain protected groups in the future eg more mature students preferring not to live in institutional blocks; more family orientated accommodation; and given the time and resources, the opportunity to possibly adapt the facilities in a private sector house to suit the needs of a disabled student to give them the chance of experiencing “city life” rather than remaining on campus for the full length of their course.

- Our allocation policy is largely determined by the wider University recruitment policy and priorities given to certain categories are reviewed annually in line with the University’s Intake Targets



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- For more accurate statistical reporting we will amend our Notice of Termination form and Transfer Room Request form to ask more specifically if factors relating to any of the protected characteristics have contributed to the student leaving the accommodation or requesting a transfer.
- We are in consultation with the SU to implement a new system of Halls Representatives for September 2012. A major part of their role will be to participate in various focus groups to feedback regularly on current procedures/future projects and new proposals. Ultimately the aim is for them to inform, help to implement and carry forward best practice for every student's first year experience, whatever group they may belong to.

### **8. Timescale for implementation of changes or introduction of new policy.**

Each December, we evaluate the provision required for the following academic year and any changes will be implemented by the following September for the new intake.

### **D. Publication**

9. Final reporter: Del Davies, Student Accommodation Manager

10. Date: May 2012

11. Review date: December 2012 and annually thereafter

